

An Essay
on
Miasmatic Fevers of the South
Their Treatment &c.

Respectfully Submitted to the
Faculty of the
Homoeopathic Medical College
of
Pennsylvania

On the twenty third day of January
Eighteen Hundred and Fifty Eight

By Joseph Henry Billingsley

Of Kentucky

1

Miasmatic fevers of the South, Their treatment, &c

It is nothing but reasonable to suppose, that difference of climate, and, Situation, would make a most remarkable difference, in the nature and character of a disease; besides the habits of a people will have a great deal to do with the development of diseases, which are indigenous to the country;

That this is true, we have ample proof every day, and of these we would be led to suppose, that those of a miasmatic character would be influenced more than any others.

As regards the "Miasmatic theory", I am not satisfied, but it is not my province to argue this, as so many

of our ablest physicians have spent time and talent investigating the matter, that it is almost useless for me to attempt to solve the mystery; No doubt, there are outward causes which influence the fevers in some degree.

Some authors are prone to believe that it is only in certain regions that the miasma is generated, and only in those situations, that the fever is prevalent; But this I do not believe, for how often those regions which we would suppose to be the hotbeds of disease, of this character, seem altogether free from miasmatic influences; while other regions, that are elevated and altogether free from the effluvia of decayed animal and vegetable matter, are subject to those fevers in their worse form.

3

How must we account for this? Must we say that there is some region far distant, in which, this poison is generated; and from thence is carried to those remote and elevated regions? Even here, there is an obstacle in the way of this argument, for how is it, that sections of country equally elevated and occupying the intervening space, are entirely free from deleterious influences? Or does this hurtful influence like some other things of which we know, gain power according to the distance, over which it travels? "Distance, it is said, lends enchantment to the view;" But I would hardly suppose, that it would increase the susceptibility of contracting disease.

It is left to us, as Homoeopaths, to find out the causes of all diseases.

of this character, and this by the ef-¹⁴
fect of drugs upon the living organism.

Taking the remedies which effect the
cure, and studying the pathogenesis
of each, the tissues upon which they act,
and the effects produced thereupon.

Then we can perceive the action of the
miasmas upon the human organism; for
none will doubt but these are causes act-
ing upon our systems every hour, which
would produce disease. But these be-
ing combated by the resisting powers,
which are contained within, are kept
in subjection, and are not developed; un-
less there is some derangement in the an-
imal-economy.

As to what these principals are, that
give origin to disease, none of us can tell,
but that they act similar to certain drugs.

5

no Homoeopathic physician will doubt; and it is by this means alone, we are able to counteract their influence.

Even, some of the old school have admitted, as much, for "Wood & Baché, in their Dispensatory." Speaking of the effects of Cinchona upon the organism, admit, that it produces a disease similar to intermittent fever. They say there is no substance which exercises such an influence over intermittents as Cinchona; and as it is probable that in the interval of these complaints, a train of morbid action is going on out of our sight, within the recesses of the nervous system; So say they it is probable that the bark produces in the same system an action equally mysterious, which supercedes that of the malady; and this accomplishes the restoration of

6

of the patient. Is it possible, that men
of their attainment, should write in this
way, and not be led to think of the homoeo-
pathicity of the drug to the disease? Why
could they not say, that here we have the
effects of a poison, in the shape of a disease,
and here, we have a drug, which produces
almost identical symptoms; and there-
fore it must act upon the same tis-
sue, and therefore will create a disease
identical!

As to the character of the diseases;
they take on so many different forms, that
it would be almost impossible to describe
them; and besides, they may be complica-
ted with others of a more or less serious
nature, but they may be reckoned under
four or five principal heads.

First, the simple form of Intermittents

7

Second, the Bilious; Third the Congestive;
Fourth the Remittent, and with the last
the Bilious Remittent fevers. All of these
if allowed to run their course, will give
rise to diseases of more or less importance.

Of all these forms, the congestive form
is most to be dreaded; as it is so rapid
in its course; and if not speedily con-
trolled, is certain death; and therefore
we will have to act with promptness,
and with all the judgement which we
are masters of; and in this form of
fever, Homoeopathy, excels all other
treatment.

The simple form of Intermitteat, comes
on, generally, with slight rigors, thirst, yawn-
ing, and general feeling of uneasiness, with
slight headache; these symptoms are
speedily followed by acceleration of the

8

pulse, heat and increase of pain about the head; The fever continues for a few hours, and then gradually subsides with, or without sweat.

The patient may have precursory symptoms of the disease, days or a week before it is fully developed; Such as general uneasiness, derangement of the gastric functions &c; and if appropriate remedies were resorted to in the incipient stage, it would be easily controlled;

But in the South, and West, this form of the fever, is so common, that it is little feared; every one supposing it, as a matter of course, they have to go through a certain process of acclimation; for which it takes from two to five years time.

The Bilious Intermittent, is where the gastric and hepatic functions are

9

implicated, and are symptoms to be little feared, as they are only symptomatic;

If the fever is suffered to proceed for any length of time, its characteristics will be those of true Bilious fever; and this will require different treatment.

The congestive inter-mittent makes its appearance, similar to that of the other forms of the fever; but the symptoms are not so well delineated. There is coldness of ^{the} extremities, which cannot be relieved by the application of heat, contractions of the muscles of the extremities, uneasiness about the head and thorax; which are soon followed by congestion of blood to the head. The face becomes red and swelled, there is oppression of the chest and dyspnoea, which increases as the fever increases; The face then becomes of a purplish hue;

10

There is chilliness over the whole body, and the patient feels as if he were dying. If these symptoms are not speedily met, and controlled, the patient either dies from Apoplexy, or becomes Asphyxiated.

There is nothing, in the incipient stages of this disease, which would lead us to prognose such an unfavorable termination.

It may be the Simple Intermittent, for a few days; and then, the symptoms of congestion may arise. As a general thing, the patient hardly ever survives the third paroxysm, and more frequently dies in the second.

The Remittent fever is similar to the other forms, but the patient is never entirely free from fever, for there are exacerbations at certain periods.

The treatment of all the varieties

11

of miasmatic fevers is similar, although, there are adjuvants used, in some, which are not used in the treatment of any other. In the simple form, there are only two or three remedies required: the pathogenetic effects of Quinine, are almost identical with the symptoms of this fever, or some forms of it; Arsenicum also covers most of the symptoms of the disease, and therefore, will be frequently indicated. Specacuantha is also, frequently called into requisition; Especially, when there is a derangement of the gastric functions, but it is useless to administer the remedy in the infinitesimal dose. It requires the crude drug. I know that a great many of our best writers, contend, that if the remedy is indicated, it will establish a cure, even, if it is given in the higher

12

potencies; but we must not be led to think, that they never saw the fever in its worse form, or they never treated it at all.

I will simply give the treatment of those, who have treated it most successfully, in the regions, where it is most prevalent.

First, the Simple Intermittent, If the fever is very high. Aconite is to be given; as soon as it begins to subside, begin with Quinine, in five grain doses, every three or four hours, until the time for the next paroxysm; or until the patient is fully under the effects of the drug.

If Arsenicum, is the remedy indicated, give a quarter of a grain of the first decimal preparation; but the

1a

Safest plan, is to use the above remedies in alternation, with small doses of Quinine.

As regards the treatment of the Congestive form, we have to act with haste, and discretion.

When we perceive that there is congestion making its appearance, we should endeavor to equalize the circulation; making applications of hot cloths to the lower extremities, using friction, if possible, and by the administration of Aconite and Belladonna, of the third attenuation — and if this does not suffice, use the first attenuation, or even the mother tincture. There is not time here to wait upon the action of the higher potencies, for in some cases, they have not the power to counteract these dangerous symptoms.

14

This treatment is only applicable to the first and second stages of this disease: As soon as the fever begins to subside, begin the use of Quinine, in five grain doses, at intervals of two hours, until the patient is fully under the effects of it; this being the only safe course; I know there are men, who would cry down any one, that uses such treatment, and would give him a list of medicines, ad infinitum, which, would, perhaps, now and then, seem to be indicated; but would have no power in combating the fiat.

I see no reason, (when the drug is homoeopathic to the disease) why we should not use it in sufficient quantity to produce the effect which we desire; even if it be in massive doses.

15

This will not destroy its homoeopathicity,
and will ward off the ridicule, which
our brothers of the old school, delight
so much, in throwing upon our shoulders.

As regards the treatment of Bilious
intermittent and remittent, we will
find the remedies, which are generally
required, to be Aconite, Nux Vomica,
Specacuanha, Arsenicum & China;
Aconite & China or Specacuanha, given
in alternation, will, generally, suffice,
but the symptoms of the disease are
what should be studied, and then
the remedy administered accordingly.

We will frequently have deleterious
effects following the disease: Such as
enlargement of the Spleen, Anæmia,
Oedematous swelling of the limbs, &c.
Here we will find the preparations

of Iron, of the greatest benefit, especially,
for enlargement of the spleen, also for
the general debility. If Quinine is
the cause of induration of the Spleen,
it will soon resume its normal state;
And if the swelling of the limbs is caused
by the same remedy, Arsenicum will
counteract its effects.

In the treatment of these fevers
the carbonate of Iron is the rem-
edy which I should use, and in al-
ternation, with Quinine, as it seems to
counteract all the bad effects of that
drug, and does not interfere with
its curative properties.

James C. Clark

of Canada West.

February 1st. 1858.